

Dominican Republic News Update

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I thought you might be interested in the latest developments regarding the Dominican Republic.

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2020 Elections Show a Promising Future

- On July 5th the people voted and new president-elect Luis Abinader of the Modern Revolutionary Party (PRM) will become the next President of the Dominican Republic on August 16, 2020.

- Of the 17,909 candidates for municipal positions, 7,899 were women, amounting to 44.1% of the candidates.
- On March 15th the Dominican municipal elections proceeded peacefully without incident, according to the JCE.
- The municipal elections ended with the Modern Revolutionary Party (PRM) winning 82 mayoralties, 52% of the seats, while the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) lost its foothold only retaining control of 64 mayoralties, 41% of the seats. The PRM candidates won in most cities, winning 26 of the 38 largest municipalities, 68%.
- In February, the Dominican Republic celebrated 176 years as an independent nation.

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The Dominican Republic Works to Combat Coronavirus

- As the Dominican Republic saw its first cases of COVID-19, President Medina announced countrywide policies and procedures to limit the spread and decreed a state of emergency, closing the country's borders, suspending non-essential commercial activities, temporarily closing schools and restaurants, canceling events, freezing taxes, enacting a curfew from 8 p.m.-6 a.m., temporarily suspending public transit, and asking private companies to move to telework. The state of emergency was extended 5 times, lasting until July 1st.
- With the end of the state of emergency, the government emphasized safety protocols like mandatory face masks, mandatory social distancing, limiting occupancy in buildings, and continued shut down of certain industries.
- Under President Medina's "Stay at Home" order 811,000 families with the solidarity card had their financial support increased to RD\$5,000 a month, and 690,000 vulnerable families received temporary support, totaling 1.5M beneficiary households.
- President Medina confirmed that the government will continue its state of emergency programs (supporting companies by covering over 866,000 employees, helping 1.5M households through the Stay at Home program, supporting 200,000 independent workers through the Pa' Ti program, and bringing hundreds of thousands of food rations to all corners of the country) through the end of his presidency on August 16th, and has encouraged the new government to continue these programs through the end of the year, even approving a complementary budget leaving the new government RD\$100B to continue these programs.
- The Central Bank allocated RD\$10B to individuals, small businesses, and retailers to help mitigate the financial burden caused by COVID-19.
- The government declared that telecommunications services could not be suspended or terminated due to lack of payment during the state of emergency, ensuring teleworking capabilities, keeping the economy and businesses running, providing access to information and keeping the public informed with situational updates, keeping citizens entertained, and keeping family and friends connected while they are asked to stay at home.
- The Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) donated 10% of its staff's April salaries (RD\$2M), to non-profit organizations to help the most vulnerable sectors of the population during the pandemic.
- The government approved a special incentive of RD\$5,000 for all Public Health, National Health System, 911 operators, National Police, Armed Forces, and Operations Center of Emergencies employees for the months of April and May for their hard work and to thank them for working regardless of potential exposure.

- President Medina and the Association of Commercial Banks eliminated minimum monthly payments and late fees, and lowered interest rates to 1% a month temporarily for all credit cards.
- Loans with maturities or partial-maturities between March 18th - May 18th were given 60-90 days to make payments.
- Insurance companies extended premium payments by 90 days, while banks issued 90-day deferred payments for personal loans, mortgages, vehicles payments, and SME loans.
- The government is covering the financial cost of COVID-19 testing for anyone with a prescription whose 59+ with a debilitating disease and/or those who present with two or more symptoms.
- USAID donated \$3.4M to the Dominican Republic to combat COVID-19 through social protection, education, water and sanitation, and food security in vulnerable communities, as well as financial assistance to help with epidemiological analysis and prognosis, tracking contamination, and surveilling the pandemic.
- The government enacted a slow 4 phase reopening:

Phase 1- began May 20th allowing micro-businesses of 10 employees to bring back half of the staff, small companies with 10-50 employees to bring back <50% of staff, and medium and large companies to bring back <25% of staff. Beauty salons and medical offices reopened by appointment only, and the public sector reopened with 50% of personnel.

Phase 2- began June 3rd allowing micro-businesses to bring back 100% of staff, small companies bringing back <75% of staff, and medium and large companies bringing back <50% of staff, while shopping centers, private transport, Sunday religious services, and gaming companies (except casinos) resumed operations.

Phase 3- began June 17th allowing companies with >50 employees to bring back 75% of staff.

Phase 4- began July 1st allowing all companies to resume work with 100% of staff, including the tourism industry, opening hotels, airports, gyms, and restaurant. New protocols require social distancing, sanitation protocols of common areas (public restrooms, hotel amenities, elevators, etc.), and requiring hotels to have a separate part of the hotel for customers who develop symptoms.

- Hotels with over 500 rooms must stay below 30% occupancy in July, below 50% in Aug., and below 75% in Dec.

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Dominican Economy Leads Latin America

- The Dominican economy grew 5% in 2019, with an average of 6% growth over the last seven years.
- In 2019, credit in the country's private sector grew 11.7% compared to the prior year.
- The Dominican economy grew 4.7% in Jan. 2020, compared to Jan. 2019, with the greatest contributions being construction, financial services, commerce, health, energy, water, free zone manufacturing, agricultural production, real estate, and rental activities.
- The country's exports reached \$2.5B in Q1, a 5.7% increase compared to Q1 2019, with the majority of exports being raw materials and consumer products.
- Dominican exports reached \$895M in January, a 3.9% increase year-on-year for that month, with the largest exports being Gold (\$132.4M), circuit breakers (\$58.3M), medical instruments (\$54.6M), cigars (\$46.9M), and ferronickel (\$44.6M).
- The Dominican economy will be one of the least affected by COVID-19 in the Caribbean and Latin America, with a projected recession of only 0.8%, compared to neighbors whose projected recessions are as high as 12%, partly due to ending 2019 with historically high international reserves, beginning 2020 with \$8.8B in reserves, around 10% of GDP.
- During the pandemic, the Dominican currency has had one of the lowest depreciation rates in the region.
- The government enacted a public-private partnership law creating a regulatory framework for the initiation, selection, contracting, execution, monitoring, and termination of PPPs, increasing transparency and competition.
- The Dominican free zones include 673 companies in 74 industrial parks, which generate over 171,000 direct jobs and 200,000 indirect jobs.
- In 2019, free zones accounted for 57.1% of the country's total exports, and reached \$5,136M in investments, a 3.2% increase compared to the previous year.

- In 2018, the free zones produced \$6,230M, representing 56.5% of total exports.
- FDI into free zones amounted to \$667M from Jan.-Sept. 2019, 29.3% of the country's FDI during that period.
- From 2015-2019, exports from free zones grew 3.5% annually, creating an average annual surplus of \$11,859M compared to free zone imports, with the majority of free zone exports being medical and surgical equipment, electrical products, textiles, tobacco products, and jewelry.
- The U.S. was the largest importer of Dominican goods, accounting for \$378M of Dominican exports, followed by Switzerland (\$132M), and Haiti (\$79M).
- The Monthly Manufacturing Activity Index (IMAM) rebounded to 52.6 in May, after it fell from 55.9 in Feb. to 38.2 in March, and remained at a low 38.6 in April, due to the pandemic.
- FDI contributes 37% of the country's tax revenues to the economy, representing 71% of exports, and contributing 22% of private sector social security.
- The Association of Foreign Direct Investors has an investment portfolio that exceeds \$20,000M and generates >200,000 jobs to the economy.
- The Dominican Republic is perfectly positioned for U.S. companies (particularly medical supplies and devices companies) to be opening more plants because it offers regional supply chains, low labor costs, a stable political situation, strong economic fundamentals, developed transportation and logistics, and close proximity to the U.S. These companies will bring in hundreds of millions in FDI, offsetting the economic losses from COVID-19.
- In the last seven years, more than 1.5M Dominicans have risen out of poverty, the government has social security coverage, it's built new schools and hospitals, and increased road safety.
- The country is projected to boost exports by 5-10% in 2021, due to a rise in gold prices, and an increase in the production of medical devices and equipment.

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Thriving Tourism Industry Begins to Reopen

- In the last seven years, the tourism sector has seen an average of 5% annual growth, adding 45.2M visitors from 2012 to 2019, and receiving 7.5M tourists in 2019.
- The country saw a 1.7% increase in tourism revenue from 2018 to 2019, rising from \$7.5B to \$7.7B.
- Tourism contributes 7.6% directly to the country's GDP, and indirectly contributes 22% to the economy.
- The largest number of visitors are from the U.S. with 15.9M tourists, followed by 6.2M Canadians.
- In the last eight years the country has received \$50.6B in tourism revenue.
- The Dominican Republic is leading the hotel boom in the Caribbean with 6,356 rooms currently under construction, about 8.4% of its existing supply.
- The government and the Association of Hotels and Tourism approved detailed health protocols for the reopening of the tourism industry, and the Ministry of Public Health is overseeing these

protocols.

- The new tourism protocols, include:

Hotels- taking temperatures of guests at check-in, have guests sign a declaration of health, provide guests with masks and hand sanitizer, require social distancing in common areas, disinfect bags, eliminate self-serve food and beverage, and enact protocols for the care and isolation of guests with symptoms;

Bars- cleaning and disinfecting all tables in-between guests, biweekly COVID-19 tests for employees, limit occupancy to 35%, require face masks while moving about, and adding hand sanitizing stations;

Restaurants- social distancing between tables, limit tables to <10 occupants, digital or disposable menus, and frequently disinfecting every surface.

- With the airports opening back up, new airline protocols have been put in place, like taking passengers' temperatures, if anyone has a temperature >100.6F or presents with symptoms, airport authorities will conduct a rapid COVID-19 test and initiate treatment and isolation protocols.
- The airports have strict guidelines on social distancing and require mandatory use of face masks. Passengers are required to submit a Traveler's Health Affidavit declaring they have not felt any COVID-19 symptoms in the last 72 hours and provide contact information for the next month.

<https://acento.com.do/2020/economia/8776424-el-turismo-crecio-un-5-anual-en-republica-dominicana-entre-2012-y-2019/>

<https://acento.com.do/2020/economia/8787960-r-dominicana-recibio-mas-de-45-millones-de-turistas-en-ultimos-siete-anos/>

<https://dominicanoday.com/dr/economy/2020/02/03/dominican-republic-tourist-arrivals-grow-5-led-by-us/>

<https://dominicanoday.com/dr/economy/2020/02/04/dominican-republic-tourism-income-sets-a-record-us-7-7b/>

<https://www.caribjournal.com/2020/02/19/dominican-republic-cuba-caribbean-hotel-boom/>

<https://acento.com.do/actualidad/republica-dominicana-esta-lista-para-reabrir-turismo-el-1-de-julio-8830906.html>

<https://dominicanoday.com/dr/tourism/2020/06/25/coronavirus-health-protocol-approved-to-reopen-tourism-in-the-dr/>

<https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/07/02/2057135/0/en/Dominican-Republic-Announces-Protocols-for-the-Reactivation-of-Tourism.html>

The Dominican Republic Continues to Increase Bilateral Relations

- The Dominican Republic has been unanimously elected as president of the Executive Council of UNESCO.
- The U.S. State Department congratulated the Dominican Republic on its democratic elections and looks forward to working together with President-elect Abinader and his government.
- The U.S. State Department donated \$1.4M to the Dominican Republic to help in its efforts against COVID-19.
- U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo congratulated the Dominican Republic on its 176th anniversary of Independence, stating, "Our deep bilateral relations are based on a mutual commitment to transparency, the rule of law and democracy".

<https://dominicanoday.com/dr/local/2020/02/26/us-dominican-ties-based-on-commitment-to-transparency/>

<https://www.state.gov/dominican-republic-independence-day-2/>

<https://acento.com.do/actualidad/republica-dominicana-presidira-grupo-preparatorio-del-consejo-ejecutivo-de-la-unesco-8828205.html>

<https://www.state.gov/united-states-congratulates-the-dominican-republic-on-successful-elections/>

<https://dominicanoday.com/dr/local/2020/04/28/us-donates-us-1-4m-to-fight-covid-19/>

President Medina Takes on Educational Reform

- Universities suspend in-person classes to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- The Ministry of Education (MINERD) and the National Institute of Student Welfare created a nationwide delivery of more than 1.8M packages of food to parents and guardians of public school students to ensure that no child goes hungry while the schools are shut down due to the state of emergency.

7/14/2020

Mail - Sylvester Lukis - Outlook

- MINERD has reached Phase III of delivering laptops to students to close the digital gap, which has helped contribute to the virtual education that has been required due to the global pandemic, having delivered laptops and netbooks to 341,808 students and 32,812 teachers.

<https://acento.com.do/2020/educacion/8794983-universidades-suspenden-docencia-presencial-por-coronavirus/>

<https://acento.com.do/2020/salud/8797430-ministerio-de-educacion-entrega-alimentos-crudos-a-padres-de-estudiantes/>

<https://acento.com.do/2020/actualidad/8797598-gobierno-entrega-alimentos-en-95-de-centros-educativos-por-covid-2019/>

<https://acento.com.do/actualidad/ministerio-de-educacion-empieza-fase-iii-de-entrega-de-laptops-con-unidades-moviles-8830881.html>

<https://acento.com.do/actualidad/ministerio-de-educacion-ha-favorecido-a-374-mil-620-estudiantes-y-docentes-con-laptops-y-netbooks-8834043.html>

All the best,

Syl Lukis

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